



Missouri Department of Higher Education

Building Missouri's future...by degrees

June 16, 2011

Dr. Robert Vartabedian, President
Missouri Western State University
4525 Downs Drive
St. Joseph, MO 64507

Dear President Vartabedian:

During the last several weeks I have been evaluating Missouri Western State University's request for a waiver of penalty under the Higher Education Student Funding Act (HESFA). The waiver request was submitted because the university approved a 6.33 percent increase in tuition and fees for Academic Year 2011-12, an amount that exceeds that permitted by HESFA. With a CPI change last year of 1.5 percent and as an institution with a below average tuition, the maximum tuition change allowed Missouri Western under HESFA without a waiver is 1.63 percent.

As you are aware, during a discussion of withholding decisions affecting higher education last week the governor's office expressed concern regarding the magnitude of the tuition increase that Missouri Western students will face in the fall. I also have reservations that the waiver request does not sufficiently warrant an increase of this magnitude. When combined with the 3 percent CPI increase booked last year that also will be charged this year, students at your institution will be facing nearly a total 10 percent increase in costs in the 2011-2012 academic year.

Consequently, I have seriously contemplated recommending the assessment of a fine in accordance with the provisions of the HESFA. However, it is difficult to envision a scenario in which the imposition of a fine would be of benefit to the students at your institution as the loss of additional resources would likely result in diminished services, programs, and/or lower or fewer financial aid awards, without reducing any costs for students.

Given this context, I am writing this letter to request that you consult with the Missouri Western Board of Governors in the interest of revisiting the previously approved tuition increase for AY11-12. A reduction in the tuition increase to bring it in line with increases adopted by the vast majority of four-year institutions would be more beneficial to the students of Missouri Western than a penalty imposed under HESFA.

Please advise me as soon as possible regarding the Board's willingness to adjust the tuition rates downward for AY11-12. We will respond expeditiously to your communication.

Regards,

David R. Russell, Ph.D.
Commissioner of Higher Education

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